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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [AO](#)
SUBJECT: ANGOLA - CATHOLIC CHURCH NEUTRAL, OPPOSITION
PARTIES POSITIVE ON CABINDAN PEACE ACCORD

REF: LUANDA 00676

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CYNTHIA EFIRD FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

Summary

1. (C) During the U.S. 4th of July celebration, Graciano Apolonio, a prominent clergyman in the Catholic Church and personal priest to President Dos Santos, stated that the Catholic Church's new Bishop in Cabinda, Filomeno Vieira Dias, was unlikely to comment on the Cabinda peace accord because of his belief in separating the church from political issues. Apolonio also noted that any statement made by priests in Cabinda, especially by Father Rual Tati or Father Casimiro Congo, do not represent the official view of the Church. Other civil society leaders shared reservations though all political party leaders stated this deal was a positive solution for Cabinda. Political leaders confirmed their support for the accord in the June 5, 2006 Jornal de Angola. While Mplabanda and some members of FCD are still unwilling to support the accord, it appears that they are fighting a losing battle. End Summary.

Catholic Church to Stay Neutral

2. (C) Of the three groups represented in the Cabindan Forum for Dialogue (FCD), only the Catholic Church has not yet commented officially on the Cabindan accord. Graciano Apolonio, a prominent Vicar in the Catholic Church and personal priest to President Dos Santos, freely discussed the Cabindan situation with PolOff during the 4th of July celebration. When asked if the new Bishop of Cabinda, Filomeno Vieira Dias, would publicly comment, Apolonio noted, "the Bishop's statement was made when he stated his unwillingness to draw his Church into political issues." Apolonio also stated that Cabindan priests Raul Tati and Casmimiro Congo, two out-spoken supporters of Cabindan separatists, "no longer represented the views of the Church." Indicating that these priests remained suspended, he noted that their decision to go against official church policy regarding the seating of the new Bishop and in their continued support for the Cabindan independence movement was based on their being overlooked for the position of Bishop, not their desire to protect the best interests of the Cabindan people. (Note: Father Tati on July 4, 2006 stated his unwillingness to acknowledge the accord. End Note.)

Opposition Political Leaders on Board

3. (C) While two leaders of a prominent faith-based NGO, the Inter-Ecclesiastic Committee for Peace in Angola (COEIPA), shared concerns that the non-inclusive process had led to an

unsatisfactory solution, all political party leaders at the 4th of July celebration felt the accord was a much-needed solution. Multiple members of a large UNITA delegation at the event felt that the deal was positive and would be implemented regardless of those unwilling to join. The President of the Party for Democratic Renewal (PRD), Luis dos Passos Cardosa, agreed with others that although all parties where not included in the discussions, the final outcome was the best deal the FCD was going to get. A July 5, 2006 article in the Jornal de Angola, the government-run daily newspaper, publicly confirmed opposition parties' support. The interim-President of the Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), Ngola KabQdu, was quoted saying the accord was "a positive step." Alexandre Sebastiao Andre, the President of the Youth and Farmers Alliance Party (PACOJA) and member of the National Assembly's Commission on Human Rights, stated that the FCD was "composed of independent people" that were not influenced by the GRA and the accord is "the path from a solution to the conflict."

Comment - Fighting a Losing Battle

14. (C) Those that are standing in the way of the accord are fighting a losing battle. With the Catholic church staying neutral and elite opinion in Luanda supporting the accord, Mplabanda and the leadership of the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC) still unwilling to support the accord are being marginalized. End Comment.
EFIRD